CLAIM AMENDMENTS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1. (Canceled).

2. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said caller is a human being or a modem.

3. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said telephone network includes at least one of a Public Switched Telephone Network, a Voice over Internet Protocol telephone network, an Integrated Services Digital Network compatible telephone network, or a private telephone network.

4. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone is an oscillating electrical signal.

5. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein generating the signal is accomplished with a dial tone generator comprising an oscillator circuit.

6. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said telephone set is an analog telephone set, an electronic telephone set, a digital telephone set, a Voice over Internet Protocol telephone set, an Integrated Services Digital Network telephone set, or a proprietary telephone set.

7. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein transmitting the signal is at least partially accomplished with at least one transmission means selected from the group consisting of a local loop, a trunk, and an extension line.

8. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein superimposing is at least partially accomplished with an electronic circuit having a memory storing said audible information message in digital format.

9. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein superimposing is executed and repeated periodically.

10. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein superimposing is executed and repeated intermittently.

11. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said audible information message includes human-intelligible words.

12. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said audible information message has the characteristic of being whisper-like.

13. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said audible information message is a branding-type message that identifies a provider of local telephone service.

14. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said audible information message includes symbolic sounds serving to identify a provider of local telephone service.

15. (Previously presented) A method for communicating information to a caller on a telephone network, said method comprising:

generating a signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone;

transmitting said signal to the receiver of a telephone set, when said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook, to thereby produce said audible dial tone; and

superimposing an audible information message over said audible dial tone while said audible dial tone is produced, wherein said audible dial tone has an associated decibel level and said audible information message has an associated overall decibel level such that said overall decibel level associated with said audible information message is lower than said decibel level associated with said audible dial tone.

16. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein at least one of generating, transmitting, and superimposing is executed at a public local exchange or a private branch exchange.

17. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, wherein said telephone set is an Integrated Services Digital Network telephone set.

18. (Currently amended) [[A]] The method ~~according to~~ of claim 15, further comprising:
generating the signal after said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook.

19. (Canceled).

20. (Previously presented) A method for communicating information to a caller on a telephone network, said method comprising:
generating a signal suitable for producing an audible dial tone;
transmitting said signal to the receiver of a telephone set, when said caller initially takes said receiver off-hook, to thereby produce said audible dial tone; and
superimposing an audible information message over said audible dial tone while said audible dial tone is produced;
wherein said audible dial tone has an associated decibel level and said audible information message has an associated overall decibel level such that said overall decibel level associated with said audible information message is lower than said decibel level associated with said audible dial tone; and
wherein said audible information message is a branding-type message that identifies a provider of local telephone service.

21. (New) The method of claim 20, wherein the telephone network comprises a Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) network.

22. (New) The method of claim 15, wherein the audible dial tone is capable of being recognized by a wait for dial tone modem so that the wait for dial tone modem can commence dialing.